



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1423 Vienna, 18 May 2023

EU Statement in Response to the Head by the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, Ambassador Dominique Waag

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Dominique Waag to the Permanent Council and thanks her for the comprehensive report on the Mission's activities.
2. The Russian Federation's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has shaken the foundations of the European security order thus aggravating further the existing security challenges and threats across the OSCE region. Russia's war of aggression has negative and profound political, security, economic, environmental and human rights consequences for the entire OSCE area and beyond.
3. We welcome Montenegro's strategic commitment to our common European values, demonstrated through full alignment with the EU's foreign and security policy, including EU restrictive measures following Russia's aggression against Ukraine.
4. We congratulate Jakov Milatović on his election as new president and are ready to continue our support to Montenegro in moving towards EU membership. In this regard, we would like to stress that political stability and implementing relevant

reforms, especially the rule of law reforms, are essential for advancing on the path towards the EU.

5. We commend the Mission's result-oriented work in its three priority areas – Democratisation, Security Cooperation and Governance, and Media – and are pleased that the Mission was able to continue implementation of its programmatic activities despite the challenging political situation and the lack of an approved OSCE Unified Budget. The EU welcomes the Mission's valuable support to the host country in achieving its national strategic objectives in line with OSCE commitments and with the Mission's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, and the Mission's close cooperation with state institutions, media, and civil society.
6. We appreciate the Mission's well-established co-operation with the Parliament of Montenegro to strengthen its personnel management capacities and transparency, as well as the inclusive engagement of the Mission with the State Election Commission on capacity-building. We encourage continuing this support.
7. As outlined in the report, the second round of presidential elections took place in Montenegro on 2 April. While the elections were competitive, with fundamental freedoms respected and peaceful, we note that a number of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations remain to be addressed. Considering the early parliamentary elections expected on 11 June, we encourage the host country to work closely with the Mission to make progress on the electoral framework, in line with ODIHR's recommendations.
8. The EU commends the Mission's excellent work on serious and organised crime, especially the good cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, Police Directorate and the Forensic Centre. In this context, we especially welcome the progress achieved in the fight against organised crime, as a result of the Mission's additional cooperation with Europol and the Specialised State Prosecutor. It is important that the progress achieved through arrests and investigations is accompanied by

continued fundamental structural and institutional reforms. We also appreciate the contribution of the Mission to the implementation of the EU-funded OSCE Regional Trial Monitoring Project in the Western Balkans (2021-2023), which contributes to strengthening the rule of law.

9. We also acknowledge the Mission's continued support to ensure the safety and security of the state-owned stockpiles of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and conventional ammunition, as well as the work in the field of Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism that Lead to Terrorism (PC/VERLT) and the engagement of youth in this regard.
10. The EU appreciates the Mission's contribution to an improved media environment in the country, through its activities on hate speech, media literacy and safety of journalists. We acknowledge the Mission's increased support to Radio Television Montenegro, the only national broadcaster that is not foreign owned, to become a modern and responsible public service.
11. From a cross-dimensional perspective, we commend the strong focus on gender equality, notably the Mission's support to the Action Plan for a more Gender-Sensitive Parliament and the mid-term evaluation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality, as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality in all of the Mission's activities.
12. The EU reaffirms its commitment to enlargement, which remains a key policy of the European Union. We reiterate the EU's unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits.
13. In conclusion, we thank you, Ambassador Waag, for your dedicated work and wish you and your team every success in the coming year.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate

Country GEORGIA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.